

The University of Chicago

CONCEPTIONS OF PARENTHOOD

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
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By
EVELYN MILLIS DUVALL

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ABSTRACT

Mothers selected to represent various subcultures in the Midwest were queried in group tests and individual interviews on their ideas of parenthood. Mothers of lower social classes, Negroes, and those with older children tend to have more traditional conceptions than do mothers of higher status, white mothers, and those with younger children. Conversely, developmental conceptions tend to be most frequent among those of the upper classes, white mothers, and those with younger children. Some conceptions are common to all groups studied.

This is a comparison of ideologies of parenthood found in mothers' groups in various subcultures in contemporary America. An attempt is made to describe the conceptions of "a good mother" and "a good child" in twenty-four groups representing four social class levels, Negro and white (Jewish and non-Jewish) and mothers of younger and older children in greater Chicago. Table 1

shows the number of groups in each classification and the number of mothers in each.

shows the number of groups in each classification and the number of mothers in each. "Experienced" and "inexperienced" mothers.—In anticipation of the fact that parents' expectations of themselves and their children may vary with the age of the children, a comparison was made between the "experienced" mothers whose first children

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

CLASS LEVELS	JEWISH		NON-JEWISH		NEGRO		TOTAL	
	Groups	Persons	Groups	Persons	Groups	Persons	Groups	Persons
I.....	2	36	1	54	1	29	4	119
II.....	4	40	5	54	1	17	10	111
III.....	1	66	3	30	1	21	5	117
IV.....	3	27	1	23	2	36	6	86
Total.....	10	169	10	161	5	103	25	433

shows the number of groups in each classification and the number of mothers in each.

The four social status levels.—It is impossible to place any one group with certainty in the complex status system of greater Chicago, a system which has not yet been studied. It is, however, feasible to (1) select active groups on the basis of their participation in the status hierarchy; (2) plot their social characteristics, as is done in Table 2; and (3) compare these latter roughly with class groups defined in other communities. Thus Level I resembles upper middle class and Level IV parallels upper-lowers of previ-

were more than five years of age and the "inexperienced" mothers whose first children

* Bernice Neugarten, "The Relation between Family Social Position and the Social Development of the Child" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, 1943). Also W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, *The Social Life of a Modern Community* ("Yankee City Series," Vol. I, 1941); *The Status System of a Modern Community* ("Yankee City Series," Vol. II, 1942) (New Haven: Yale University Press). Also Kenneth Eells, "Report on Refining and Testing the Validity of the Index of Status Characteristics" (unpublished MS, Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, July, 1945).

TABLE 2
SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOUR CLASS LEVELS

Class Levels	Occupation	Source of Income	Area Lived in	Type of House	Education and Literary Interests	Personal Appearance (at home)*
I	Doctors; lawyers; university professors; business managers	Fees; profits; salaries; some legacies	"Smart" residential: North Shore; Gold Coast; "good" Negro areas	Medium to large apartments and houses; medium to good condition; furnishings modern, smart	College and professional; read: <i>Vogue</i> , <i>Fortune</i> , <i>Harper's</i>	Smart suits; tailored dresses; lounging pajamas. Immaculate grooming
II	Neighborhood doctors; neighborhood dentists; chemists; traveling salesmen; small-business owners and operators	Fees; profits; salaries; wages	"Good" residential: west suburbs; Rogers Park; Austin; "good" Negro areas	Medium-sized apartments and houses; medium condition; furnishings nice	College and professional; read: <i>Life</i> , <i>Good Housekeeping</i> , <i>Harper's Bazaar</i> , <i>Readers' Digest</i>	Simple wool dresses; sweaters and slacks; good print dresses. Careful grooming
III	Hospital technicians; post office clerks; grocers; butchers; painters; semiskilled laborers	Profits; wages; wife may work "to help out"	"Fair" residential near: Portage Park; Washington Park; East (white); West (Negro)	Small apartments and houses; poor to fair condition; furnishings ordinary, crowded	Up to high school; read: <i>Collier's</i> , <i>True Confessions</i> , <i>Woman's Home Companion</i> ; religious papers	Housedresses (clean); cotton housecoats; "old" dresses and aprons. Clean
IV	Stockyards workers; store clerks; war-plant laborers; domestics	Wages; W.P.A. supplements; wife usually works	"Poor" residential: West Roosevelt Street; Lake Street; Stockyards	Two or three rooms; rear entrance delapidated to poor condition; furnishings just adequate, cluttered	Education rarely mentioned; read: comic books	Housedresses (may be soiled and/or torn); bathrobes (faded, shrunken). Respectable grooming

* Seen by appointment except for some in Class Levels III and IV, when lack of telephone necessitated "surprising" the mother.

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF EXPERIENCED AND INEXPERIENCED MOTHERS IN THE TOTAL SAMPLE

CLASS LEVEL	JEWISH				NON-JEWISH (WHITE)				NEGRO				TOTAL (BY EXPERIENCE)			GRAND TOTAL
	In-exp.*	Exp.†	Un-known‡	Total	In-exp.	Exp.	Un-known	Total	In-exp.	Exp.	Un-known	Total	In-exp.	Exp.	Un-known	
I.....	25	9	2	36	32	20	2	54	14	12	3	29	71	41	7	119
II.....	14	19	7	40	4	39	11	54	1	15	1	17	19	73	19	111
III.....	3	62	1	66	2	23	5	30	0	19	2	21	5	104	8	117
IV.....	14	11	2	27	6	10	7	23	4	11	21	36	24	32	30	86
Total..	56	101	12	169	44	92	25	161	19	57	27	103	119	250	64	433

* Inexp. stands for "inexperienced mothers" with first children five years old or younger.

† Exp. stands for "experienced mothers" with first children over five years.

‡ Age of children unknown (incomplete data).

were five years old or less. The distribution of the mothers on this basis is found in Table 3.

PROCEDURE AND METHOD

The original data, collected in every instance at a regular meeting of a mothers' group, consisted of minimal face-sheet in-

formation from each mother, and her free responses to two questions, "What are five things a good mother does?" and "What are five things a good child does?" This is a modification of a device used by Bavelas² in

² Alex Bavelas, "A Method of Investigating Individual and Group Ideology," *Sociometry*, V (1942), 371-77.

getting group ideologies of school children in the classroom. In formulating the categories, the original wording used by the subjects was kept, and the responses were finally grouped into twelve categories of "a good mother" and thirteen of "a good child." Two other judges, working independently, categorized the responses of all 433 persons in this study as well as the 36 others used in the pretest. Agreement between the three workers was 97.1 per cent.

Two types of responses were: (1) the traditional, that is, what used to be expected of a good mother and a good child (the roles are rigidly conceived); and (2) the nontraditional, which is characterized by expectations of mother and child in terms of growth and development rather than as specific behavioral conformities (the conceptions of role are dynamic and flexible). This developmental emphasis is so consistently strong in the nontraditional type of response that, at the cost of semantic purity, a dichotomy of "traditional" and "developmental" was recognized in the data and explored as follows.

The traditional-developmental division was devised by the investigator with the help of four other experienced workers. Two years later it was judged in its final form by three other social scientists, with complete consensus. Percentages of traditional and developmental responses for the various groups brought the differences into focus and provided a basis for observing trends. The categories with typical responses, in the original wording, follow.

CATEGORIES—A GOOD MOTHER

(With typical responses)

Traditional conception:

1. "Keeps house." (Washes, cooks, cleans, mends, sews, manages household.)
2. "Takes care of child physically." (Keeps child healthy, guards child's safety, feeds, clothes, bathes, sees that child rests.)
3. "Trains child to regularity." (Establishes regular habits, provides schedule, sees to regular hours for important functions.)
4. "Disciplines." (Corrects child, reprimands, punishes, scolds, demands obedience, re-

wards good behavior, is firm, is consistent, keeps promises.)

5. "Makes the child good." (Teaches obedience, instructs in morals, builds character, prays for, sees to religious education.)

Developmental conception:

6. "Trains for self-reliance and citizenship." (Trains for self-help, encourages independence, teaches how to be a good citizen, how to adjust to life, teaches concentration.)
7. "See to emotional well-being." (Keeps child happy and contented, makes a happy home, makes child welcome, helps child feel secure, helps child overcome fears.)
8. "Helps child develop socially." (Provides toys, companions, plays with child, supervises child's play.)
9. "Provides for child's mental growth." (Gives educational opportunities, provides stimulation to learn, reads to child, tells stories, guides reading, sends child to school.)
10. "Guides with understanding." (See child's point of view, gears life to child's level, answers questions freely and frankly, gives child freedom to grow, interprets, offers positive suggestions.)
11. "Relates self lovingly to child." (Shows love and affection, enjoys child, spends time with child, shares with child, is interested in what child does and tells, listens.)
12. "Is a calm, cheerful, growing person one's self." (Has more outside interests, is calm and gentle, has a sense of humor, laughs, smiles, gets enough recreation.)

CATEGORIES—A GOOD CHILD

(With typical responses)

Traditional conception:

1. "Keeps clean and neat." (Is orderly, is clean, keeps self neat.)
2. "Obeys and respects adults." (Minds parents, no back talk, respects adults.)
3. "Pleases adults." (Has good character traits, is honest, truthful, polite, kind, fair, courteous at all times.)
4. "Respects property." (Takes care of his things, is not destructive, hangs up his clothes.)
5. "Is religious." (Goes to Sunday School, loves God, prays, follows Jesus.)

6. "Works well." (Studies, goes to school, is reliable, takes responsibilities, is dependable in his work.)
7. "Fits into the family program." (Has an interest in his home, does his share, runs errands willingly, helps out at home.)

Developmental conception:

8. "Is healthy and well." (Eats and sleeps well, grows a good body, has good habits.)
9. "Shares and co-operates with others." (Gets along with people, likes others, is developing socially, tries to help, plays with other children.)

known while the categories were being formulated. These computed frequencies become the bases for comparison of the social status, religious and racial background, and experience of the parents.

Eighty-three mothers representative of each of the groups were selected for interviews. A guided interview, eliciting free responses to a few key questions, was used uniformly. Excerpts from these interviews are used to elaborate, corroborate, and interpret statistical findings, but there is no at-

TABLE 4
RANGE AND RANK OF RESPONSES OF INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES
("A GOOD MOTHER")

CATEGORY		RANGE AND RANK THROUGH ALL SOCIAL CLASS, RACIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND EXPERIENTIAL GROUPINGS			
Num- ber	Response	Lowest		Highest	
		Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent	Rank
2	"Takes care of child physically".....	10.0	5th	40.1	1st
10	"Guides with understanding".....	4.1	9th	21.1	1st
1	"Keeps house".....	1.2	12th	20.2	1st
11	"Relates self lovingly to child".....		12th	18.7	1st
5	"Makes child good".....	3.0	10th	16.4	2d
7	"Sees to emotional well-being".....	2.2	11th	13.1	2d
8	"Helps child develop socially".....	2.6	11th	11.6	2d
12	"Is a calm, cheerful, growing person"	3.4	10th	10.5	4th
9	"Provides for child's mental growth".	2.5	11th	9.0	4th
4	"Disciplines".....		12th	9.0	6th
3	"Trains child to regularity".....	0.7	12th	8.1	5th
6	"Trains for self-reliance and citizen- ship".....		12th	5.9	6th

10. "Is happy and contented." (Keeps in good humor, is a cheerful child, is happy, is emotionally well adjusted.)
11. "Loves and confides in parents." (Responds with affection, loves his parents, has confidence in his parents, trusts and confides in them.)
12. "Is eager to learn." (Shows initiative, asks questions, accepts help, expresses himself, likes to learn.)
13. "Grows as a person." (Progresses in his ability to handle himself and different situations, enjoys growing up.)

The relative frequency of responses in any one or more of the categories was un-

tempt to use interview material in judging a mother's conduct, since it is not her behavior that is being studied but rather the official ideology of the group to which she belongs.

FINDINGS

When mothers respond to the question, "What are five things a good mother does?" a great variety of replies are collected. Some are given much more frequently than others. The range and rank of each of the twelve categories of "a good mother" through all the twenty-four groupings (Negro and white, Jewish and non-Jewish, experienced

and inexperienced each in four class levels) is found in Table 4. In general, the good mother is defined as one who "takes care of the child physically."

Mothers mention many things "a good child" does. Frequencies of the responses vary widely, as is shown in Table 5. On the whole, the good child is described as one

TABLE 5
RANGE AND RANK OF RESPONSES OF INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES
("A GOOD CHILD")

CATEGORY		RANGE AND RANK THROUGH ALL SOCIAL CLASS, RACIAL, RELIGIOUS AND EXPERIENTIAL GROUPINGS			
Number	Response	Lowest		Highest	
		Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent	Rank
2	"Obeys and respects his parents"....	10.0	4th	27.3	1st
3	"Pleases adults".....	2.3	9th	23.4	1st
9	"Shares and co-operates".....	3.3	9th	21.1	1st
8	"Is healthy".....	2.0	10th	21.1	1st
12	"Is eager to learn".....	0.8	12th	21.0	1st
1	"Keeps clean and neat".....	3.8	12th	16.3	3d
7	"Fits into the family program".....	1.2	10th	14.3	2d
6	"Works well".....	1.5	12th	10.5	5th
11	"Loves and confides in parents".....		12th	10.5	4th
10	"Is happy".....	1.2	12th	8.0	5th
4	"Respects property".....		12th	5.2	7th
13	"Grows as a person".....		12th	4.4	9th
5	"Is religious".....		13th	2.6	9th

TABLE 6
FREQUENCIES OF EACH CATEGORY FOR "A GOOD MOTHER"

CATEGORY		CHARACTERISTIC OF:									
Number	Typical Response	Class Level				Religious Background		Race		Experience	
		I	II	III	IV	Jew	Non-Jew	White	Negro	Inexp.	Exp.
1	"Keeps house".....			×	×				×		×
2	"Takes care of child physically"...			×	×				×		×
3	"Trains child".....				×				×		
4	"Disciplines".....	×	×							×	
5	"Makes child good".....			×	×		×		×		×
6	"Trains for self-reliance".....										
7	"Sees to emotional well-being"....					×		×			
8	"Helps child develop socially".....	×	×							×	
9	"Provides for child's mental growth"										
10	"Guides with understanding".....	×	×			×		×		×	
11	"Loves child".....	×	×				×	×		×	
12	"Is a calm, growing person".....							×		×	

* Indicates significance. † Trend slight.
× Indicates frequencies characteristically high.

who "obeys and respects his parents" and "pleases adults."

In the comparison of the proportion of the individual responses, as found in the several groups, significant differences in the way the categories cluster were revealed. Clusters of categories emerge as characteristic of some social class levels, racial, religious, and experiential groupings. Table 6 clearly shows the tendency of categories 1, 2, 3, and 5 of "a good mother" (each of them traditional) to be characteristic of the

Level I—the Negro as compared with the white, and the experienced as compared with the mothers of younger children. In addition, non-Jewish mothers mention items in category 2 significantly more frequently than do Jewish mothers. Conversely, categories 8, 9, 10 and 12 (developmental) tend to characterize the upper groups, the Jewish, the white, and the mothers of younger children.

Differences between the frequencies of the various categories, as may be seen in

TABLE 7
FREQUENCIES OF EACH CATEGORY FOR "A GOOD CHILD"

CATEGORY		CHARACTERISTIC OF:									
		Class Level				Religious Background		Race		Experience	
		I	II	III	IV	Jew	Non-Jew	White	Negro	In-exp.	Exp.
Num-ber	Typical Response										
1	"Keeps clean and neat".....			×	×				×		
2	"Obeys and respects adults".....		×	×	×		×		×		×
3	"Pleases adults".....		×	×	×						×
4	"Respects property".....		×					×			
5	"Is religious".....						×				
6	"Works well".....		×	×	×						×
7	"Fits into family program".....		×	×	×		×				×
8	"Is healthy and well".....	×				×				×	
9	"Shares and co-operates".....	×	×			×		×		×	
10	"Is happy".....	×								×	
11	"Loves and confides in parents"....	×	×					×		×	
12	"Is eager to learn".....	×				×		×		×	
13	"Grows as a person".....										

* Indicates significance.

† Trend slight.

× Indicates frequencies characteristically high.

two lower social class levels as compared with the two upper; the Negro as compared with the white mothers, and the experienced as compared with the inexperienced. Categories 8, 10, and 11 (all developmental) are characteristic of the two upper social class levels, the whites in the sample and the mothers of younger children (inexperienced).

Categories for "a good child" tend to cluster perceptibly in the same way (see Table 7). Categories 1, 2, and 3 (traditional) characterize the two lower class levels—and to a slight extent Level II as compared with

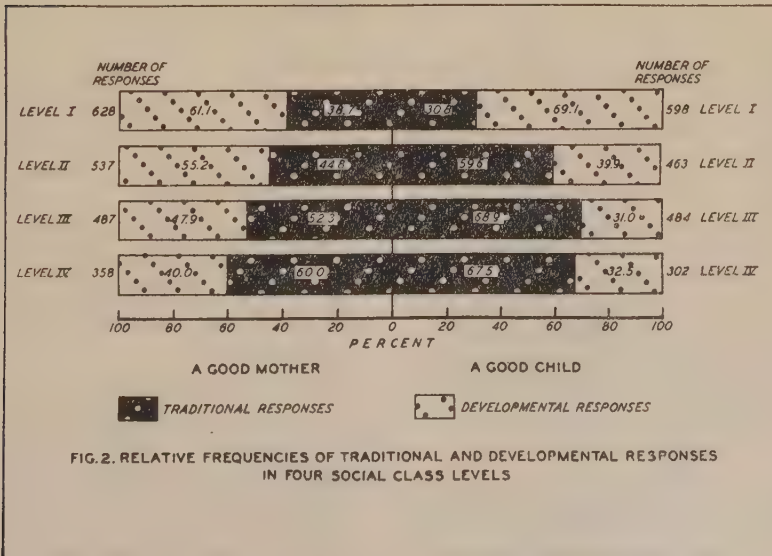
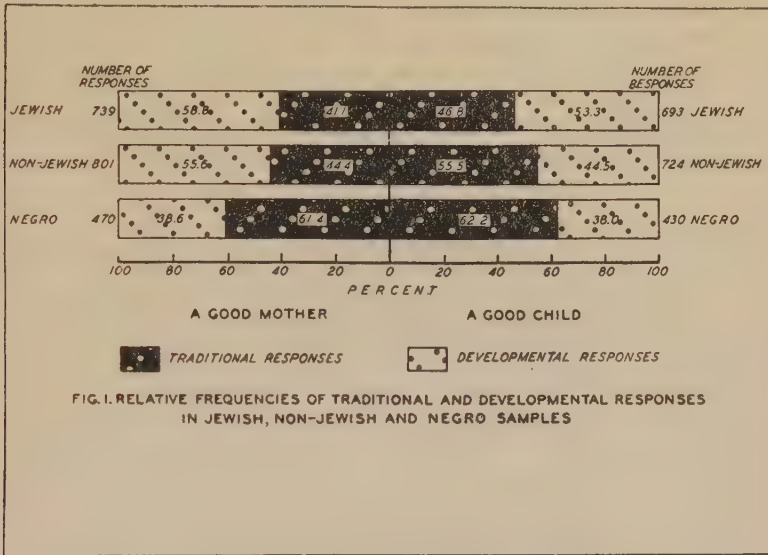
Tables 6 and 7, show consistent trends and seem worthy of further exploration.

By combining response categories into traditional and developmental, as described above, we are able to compare the frequencies of the two kinds of responses with results which are shown graphically in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

Figure 1 shows the relative frequencies of traditional and developmental responses for both "a good mother" and "a good child" in the Jewish, non-Jewish white, and Negro groupings. It is clear that the Negro mothers consistently mentioned traditional qualities

both of a good mother and a good child appreciably more frequently than did either of the white groups. There is a very slight tendency in the non-Jewish white groups toward higher frequencies of traditional responses than in the Jewish groups. The trends for conceptions of a good mother tend to resemble closely those of the good child.

Figure 2 portrays the relative frequencies of traditional and developmental responses in the four social class levels. It is evident that traditional responses are more frequent at the lower social class levels and less frequent at the upper levels. This is a straight-line trend throughout the four class levels for both "a good mother" and, with a slight exception at Level III and IV, for "a good



child." Conversely, developmental responses are consistently more frequent in the upper levels and less frequent at the lower levels.

Representative critical ratios (Table 8) show these observed differences in percentages of traditional and developmental responses between several of the social class levels to be significant within the Jewish, non-Jewish, and Negro samples.

Mothers of Level I speak of their children as developing persons: A Negro mother of three boys, six, eleven, and twelve years of age, says, "The principal thing is that I want to give them an opportunity to grow up strong and happy and capable and independent"; a North Shore white mother of a

one Sunday, for instance. We got outside and she said, 'I made wee-wee.' She couldn't help it. She does sometimes, so I just changed her pants and we didn't worry about it.

In contrast, mothers at the other three levels are frequently embarrassed by their children's conduct. A Jewish mother in Level II with a girl of four-and-a-half and a boy of two years relates:

I never taught G—— to wash her hands after completing her toilet and one day in school she went to the washroom and when she came back the teacher asked her if she had washed her hands. She hadn't, and when she told me I was so embarrassed! Before this I had always wiped them after she washed them. Well, believe me,

TABLE 8*
SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PERCENTAGES OF TRADITIONAL (DEVELOPMENTAL) RESPONSES IN CLASS LEVELS WITHIN THE JEWISH, NON-JEWISH, AND NEGRO CONCEPTIONS OF "A GOOD MOTHER"

Jewish Class Levels Compared	Critical Ratio	Non-Jewish Class Levels Compared	Critical Ratio	Negro Class Levels Compared	Critical Ratio
IV-I	4.65	IV-I	1.81	IV-I	4.74
IV-II	2.94	IV-II	4.07	IV-II	0.85
III-I	5.65	IV-III	3.48	III-I	4.25
II-I	1.94	I-II	2.86	II-I	3.26
III-II	3.54				

* A critical ratio of 2.68 or more is significant, at the .05 level.

nine-year-old boy and a five-year-old girl says, "They are interesting and it is fun to watch them develop and grow and learn." These mothers speak of their children as having rights of their own: "If we call them and they are doing something, we don't expect them to drop what they are doing right that minute and come. Their activities are important, too, and they should be able to finish what they are doing. We try to respect the individual rights of the child" (Negro, Level I). These parents tend to be permissive and not to be greatly disturbed by the opinions and judgments of others. A Level I Jewish mother of an infant son and a four-year-old daughter says,

You have to let them know that if they do something wrong, it's all right and not too important. J—— did something at Sunday School

I taught her right then and there. That teacher must have wondered what kind of home she comes from.

A mother at Level III with a boy of twelve and a girl of nine says, "I'm glad I have a yard to hang my clothes out in nice weather, so neighbors can see I do have clothing aplenty for them even if they do look messed up so much of the time." While a Level IV Jewish mother of a six-year-old girl expresses embarrassment over her child's behavior:

A few weeks ago a mother asked if I would let S—— come up to her house and play with her little girl P——. I let S—— go up to the house and she seemed to have had a good time. She didn't repeat her visit and the mother didn't repeat her invitation. I didn't wonder about this at all. Then the other day I was at a luncheon

which P——'s mother attended and we were at the same table of bridge. She embarrassed me terribly. She asked me, "Who is S——'s boy friend?" I explained that S—— didn't have a special boy friend; that all the little boys around the neighborhood she called boy friend. I asked her why she asked. "Well, S—— paraded in front of P—— like this [and Mrs. G. jiggled her shoulders and squirmed her hips] and said to her, "P——, do you know what my boy friend calls me? Son of a b——." If there had been a hole around I would have fallen through. What a time to tell me! I'm ashamed to let S—— play

such behavior difficult to understand and to cope with and often speak wistfully of the old-fashioned virtues that are no more.

Differences between mothers of older and younger children.—Responses of only mothers who gave the exact ages of their children were used, which accounts for the slight discrepancies of the number of responses in the various groupings.

Figure 3 shows the relative frequencies of traditional and developmental responses for both "a good mother" and "a good child

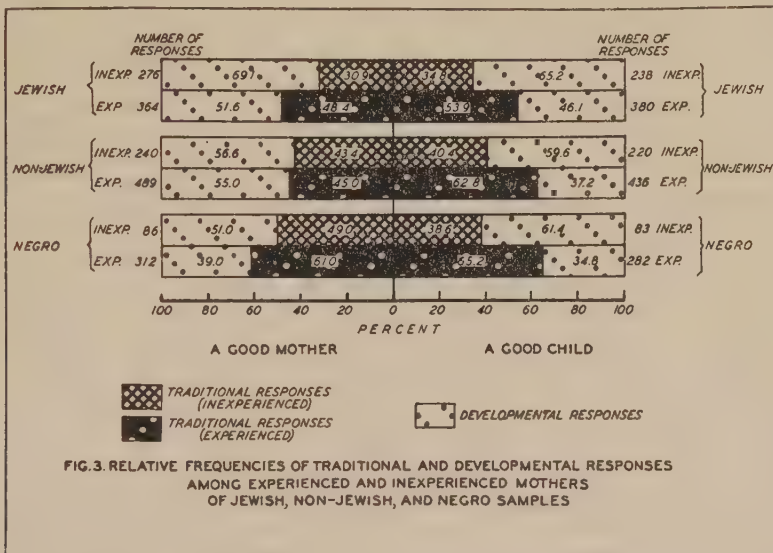


FIG. 3. RELATIVE FREQUENCIES OF TRADITIONAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL RESPONSES AMONG EXPERIENCED AND INEXPERIENCED MOTHERS OF JEWISH, NON-JEWISH, AND NEGRO SAMPLES

with P——. Imagine what her mother thinks! She must think we use that language around here. I put pepper on S——'s tongue.

Several hundred pages of similar interview material give the impression of the striving of mothers at the lower levels for respectability, which tends to be related to "no smoking," "no drinking," and "good respectable company." They do not hesitate to "light into the kids" when the children do not mind, or to express their hostilities and rejections quite freely. There are evidences of considerable bewilderment and confusion. These mothers with more traditional concepts regret that children are not as obedient, as respectful, or as "mannerable" as they should be. The mothers find

child" in the Jewish, non-Jewish white, and Negro groups. It is clear that mothers of older children give consistently higher percentages of traditional responses to questions designed to elicit group conceptions of parenthood and of children than do mothers of younger children. This is true of the Jewish, the non-Jewish, and the Negro samples studies.

Table 9 shows the same tendency for mothers of older children to hold more traditional views than mothers of younger, in each class level as well as in the grand total.

CONCLUSIONS

Certain qualities of a good mother and a good child tend to be mentioned consistent-

ly more frequently than others by all mothers, whatever the social class (within the range studied), the age of first child, the racial background, or the religious affiliation. This common conception is in terms of taking care of the child physically. The good child is most frequently defined in terms of "obeys and respects his parents" and "pleases adults." All these conceptions are traditional rather than developmental as defined in this investigation.

Mothers of the lower class levels tend more consistently to the traditional responses than do mothers at the upper class

This is especially true in the highest social class level. Differences at the other three levels are inconclusive.

Mothers of older children tend to respond consistently more traditionally than do mothers whose first children are still five years old or younger. This tendency is noted in each class level and for each of the religious and racial groups.

Thus, while certain concepts are commonly held by all, mothers within the various subcultures of our society differ significantly in their conceptions of parenthood and in what they expect of their children.

TABLE 9
TRADITIONAL RESPONSES (NOS. 1-5) OF INEXPERIENCED AND
EXPERIENCED MOTHERS: "A GOOD MOTHER"

CLASS LEVEL	INEXPERIENCED MOTHERS' RESPONSES*		EXPERIENCED MOTHERS RESPONSES†	
	Number	Per Cent Traditional	Number	Per Cent Traditional
I.....	379	36.8	228	44.9
II.....	93	33.4	298	41.4
III.....	24	37.6	490	53.5
IV.....	106	49.0	149	65.9
Total.....	602	38.4	1,165	50.0

* Inexperienced mothers have first child five years old or younger.

† Experienced mothers have first child over five years old.

levels. This is a simple trend with the highest percentages of traditional responses at the lowest levels and the greatest number of developmental responses at the upper levels. These class level differences remain for each age group, religious group, and racial stock studied and for conceptions of both the good mother and the good child.

Negro mothers lean more consistently and significantly to the traditional in their expectations of their children and their conceptions of their roles as parents than do white mothers. This racial difference is true at every level studied and for the two experiential groups.

There is a slight tendency in the Jewish mothers toward developmental responses, which is less marked in non-Jewish mothers.

These differences tend to be most marked between social class levels, between Negroes and whites, and between mothers of older and mothers of preschool children. Slight differences are noted between the replies of Jewish and non-Jewish mothers.

The family, as the primary unit of our society, reflects and adjusts to industrialization, urbanization, and the secularization of life. In its transition from the traditional institution type of family to the person-centered unit³ of companionship that it is becoming, conceptions of the role of the parent and the child are shifting. These changes do not appear all at once and with

³ E. W. Burgess and H. J. Locke, *The Family from Institution to Companionship* (New York: American Book Co., 1945).

equal force throughout the total society, but are evidenced first in little islands of the new that break off from the mass of tradition and become established in subgroups within the culture. These developmental islands are characterized by such concepts as respect for the person (both child and adult), satisfaction in personal interaction, pride in growth and development, and a permissive, growth-promoting type of guidance as opposed to the more traditional attempts to "make" children conform to patterns of being neat and clean, obedient and respectful, polite and socially acceptable.

Traditional conceptions of parenthood remain in the lower-middle and upper-lower class levels, where recent migration, household drudgery, cramped living, and infrequency of opportunity to meet with other modes of adjustment keep both parents and children in line with traditional conceptions of role. The effort to achieve respectability so evident in the two lower class levels and among the minority racial group tends further to perpetuate conformity.

The tendency for mothers of younger children toward more developmental replies may be interpreted in a number of ways. The evidence points to the possibility that conformity is demanded of families with children old enough to have some life outside the family circle. As children become old enough to go to school and to range further afield in the community, the social pressures toward conformity are felt both by them and by their mothers.

Thus, we hypothesize a seesaw progress even within the more advanced groups. Some inexperienced mothers view their roles along new lines and break with the past in their efforts to make a more adequate adjustment to a changed social situation. As their children grow older and begin to represent them in the larger world, the earlier flexibility is modified by the demands of the more traditional mass. This theory of the shift in conceptions of role as a part of the adjustment to social change would bear further investigation.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

